

Bright Star Touring Theatre

## Black History's

# Groundbreaking Geniuses

WE'RE A NATIONALLY TOURING  
THEATRE COMPANY:  
Serving 1000's of audiences  
annually  
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Classroom Study Guide

[www.brightstartheatre.com](http://www.brightstartheatre.com)

## A Celebration of artists, thinkers and inventors who changed the world .

### ABOUT OUR SHOW

#### Quick Summary:

You're about to go on a journey you will remember forever! The ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Groundbreaking Genius Museum! But while the museum curator is busy trying to find his scissors, the exhibit's real-life geniuses from throughout Black History keep introducing themselves to the awaiting guests and reporters!

#### Grades

This 45-minute production has been specially designed to be enjoyed by young audiences. This show is one of dozens that we tour throughout the world from our base in North Carolina.

After the show you can ask our actors anything about the people, the show, acting and more!

#### Did you know?

"Similar to groundbreaking ceremonies, the exact origin of ribbon cutting ceremonies are largely unknown. However, we do know that these ceremonies gained popularity in the late 1800's after a ribbon-cutting occurred at the opening of a Louisiana railroad line"  
-Perlo Construction

Did you know  
black NASA  
Scientist Lonnie  
Johnson invented  
the Super Soaker  
Water Gun!

*Maya Angelou 1928-2014.  
She was an American  
memoirist, poet, and civil  
rights activist. She published  
seven autobiographies,  
three books of essays,  
several books of poetry, and  
is credited with a list of  
plays, movies, and television  
shows spanning over 50  
years.*



**Mae Jemison  
born in 1956, In  
1992, Jemison  
became the first  
African American  
woman to travel  
in space.**



Bottom: Mae Jemison

## Doctor Daniel Hale Williams (1858-1931):

He founded Provident Hospital in 1891, which was the first non-segregated hospital in the United States.

In 1893, Dr. Williams became the first surgeon to performed open-heart surgery on a human.

Provident also had an associated nursing school for African Americans.

Williams Park in Chicago is also named in his honor. ]

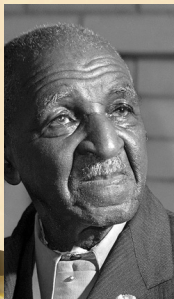


Ralph Ellison 1913-1994

Ellison was an American writer, literary critic, and scholar best known for his novel Invisible Man, which won the National Book Award in 1953.

## Dorothy Vaughan 1910-2008

Those who speak of NASA's pioneers rarely mention the name Dorothy Vaughan, but as the head of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics' (NACA's) segregated West Area Computing Unit from 1949 until 1958, Vaughan was both a respected mathematician and NASA's first African-American manager.



## George Washington Carver 1864-1943

He was one of the most prominent black scientists of the early 20th century. From his lab in Alabama he developed hundreds of uses for the peanut! He turned over all of his research and work to help others.



### What is a Groundbreaker and a Genius?

**Groundbreaker:** A person who is an originator, innovator, or pioneer in a particular activity

**Genius:** A person who is exceptionally intelligent or creative, either generally or in some aspect.

## CREATE A SCENE

There are so many groundbreaking geniuses that didn't make it into our show. For this activity break into small group and create a new scene that could be added to bring to a life a new figure. Write the scene as a group and jump on your feet to bring it to life. Theatre is best when it's active and engaging. Perform these for the class.



### Deep-Dive your Genius!

Pick your favorite person from the show--one of the actual groundbreaking geniuses--deep dive this person's life! What makes their story so interesting? Where did they live and grow up? What do you think inspired them to do the things they did? Can you find pictures of them, their work, their life?



Your turn to be in the show...

All of these people were just everyday people--just like you. What are you going to do to change the world? Imagine in 50 or 100 years there's a new version of this show being created and this time YOU are going to be written about. Why did you make it into the show? What genius and groundbreaking thing did YOU do? Regular people are the people that change the world all the time. so what are you going to do with this one life we have?

## QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- 1) WHY DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO LEARN ABOUT THESE PEOPLE FROM AMERICA'S PAST?
- 2) WHO IS SOMEONE YOU CONSIDER A BLACK HISTORY GROUNDBREAKING GENIUSES THAT WASN'T IN THE SHOW?
- 3) WHO WAS THE COOLEST PERSON IN THE SHOW THAT MOST INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE TODAY?
- 4) WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE IN AMERICA DURING THESE DIFFERENT PERIODS OF TIME WHEN THESE GENIUSES WERE ALIVE?



**HISTORY IS IMPORTANT!**

## Classroom Activities

### CLASSROOM IDEA:

#### Invention Convention

- Think of how George Washington Carver invented uses for the peanut or Lonnie Johnson invented the super soaker water gun. What is your new invention?
- In small groups, come up with a new invention together and create it (even if it's just a drawing). How does it function? What is its purpose? Why do we need it?
- Take turns presenting the ideas at the "National Invention Convention" in your classroom!

### CLASSROOM IDEA: I'm a Poet and Didn't Know It!

Read Maya Angelou's famous poem 'Caged Bird' as a class. Discuss. Then walk around with a bowl or hat and have students pull a piece of paper. Each paper will have a different word written inside (example: cat, light bulb, sock, etc). Then have each student write a poem about that word. Either turn in or have them present.

### CLASSROOM IDEA: Groundbreaker Artistic Showcase

- 1. Preparation:** Divide the class into small groups. Assign each group a specific groundbreaker, genius or influential figure from any time throughout Black History. Some examples from our show are Dorothy Vaughn, George Washington Carver, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, Ralph Ellison, Mae Jemison, but feel free to use anyone we didn't talk about i.e., Dr. King, Frederick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, Muhammad Ali, etc.
- 2. Research and Creation:** Give each group time to do library and internet research on these heroes from Black History. Have them gather as much information as possible and then create a piece of art around that person, their life and why they are famous.
  - This can be visual art like a painting, series of drawings, an interpretive dance or a play of their life.
  - It could also be verbal. For example; a book report, writing down the life story, writing a play, poem or song about the person.
  - Or the group could choose to do a combination of any of the above as long as everyone participates.
- 3. Day of the Show:** Set the classroom up like a theatre with an audience and a "stage" area. You could even bring in lamps to light the stage and turn the overhead lights down so it feels like a real theatrical performance. Or if you have access to a school auditorium it could be there, too. Perhaps have popcorn or snacks to serve so it feels extra special. Then announce each group at a time and have them come to the "stage" and officially present their person. If it is a dance, have them explain the dance afterward. If it is a series of drawings, have them talk us through them. Encourage thunderous applause after everyone presents because for some, it takes a lot of courage to speak in front of their peers. Afterward you could always have a cast party or group discussion and encourage everyone to go around and talk about who and what they learned that day from the showcase.

### CLASSROOM IDEA: Intrepid Reporter

**Encourage students to imagine they are a reporter meeting any of the geniuses they met in the play.**

**In a reporter's journal or on a sheet of paper, have them envision what it would be like to interview that person. Think of what questions they would like to ask them. Have them write those questions down.**

**Then in a group class discussion go through the questions and discuss what everyone thinks the answers would have been.**



We travel the country in mini vans!

## WHO ON EARTH IS BRIGHT STAR THEATRE?

Founded in 2003, Bright Star tours with a number of shows each season, from anti-bullying and STEM to Black History, and everything in between. The company strives to make professional theatre as accessible as possible with affordable pricing and quality shows.

We thank you for the opportunity to serve your young audience and hope you found the show and actors pleasant and enjoyable. We hope to make theatre a part of every young person's life!

## THEATRE DEFINITIONS

**Actors:** The people on stage that perform the play.

**Backdrop:** The background for the play.

**Props:** Anything that an actor holds while on stage--a cane, book or rubber chicken.

**Downstage:** the area closest to the audience -- a long time ago stages were built at angles.

**Upstage:** The area away from the audience-- like the back wall of a stage.

**Director:** The person who tells the actors where to go while they are on-stage and helped them create the characters they would play.

**Costumes:** The wigs, clothing and glasses that the actors wear to help flesh out their characters.

**Auditions:** How an actor gets a role is by auditioning. They may have to interview, pretend to be a character from the play, read something from it, etc.

**Set designer:** The person who decides what should be on the background and who paints or creates it.

## CONTACT US ANYTIME

Connect with us anytime! We love receiving feedback, thank you cards, pictures and whatever else from you and your students.

The best way to contact us is to send an email to [booking@brightstartheatre.com](mailto:booking@brightstartheatre.com)

Our actors average around 1,000 miles a week traveling the country to entertain young audiences.

Our company was founded in 2003 and is owned by an Emmy-winning Actor.

Our programs have been seen around the country and across the world!